

CAVALCADE  
OF COUNTIES:

# TIDEWATER LAND

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**Cumberland County, a  
Merger of Today and  
Yesterday, Has Found  
Prosperity in Its Rich  
Soil, Uniform Climate,  
Navigable Streams and  
Abundant Oyster Beds**

**BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM**

Staff photos by Porter.

(This is the sixth of a series of articles dealing with New Jersey's 21 counties, sketching their past and present with, now and then, a peek into their future. The counties will be considered in alphabetical order each week. Next Sunday: Essex County.)

**C**UMBERLAND COUNTY'S prosperity fits as naturally and easily as a tailor-made suit. Everything about the county—rich soil, equable climate, navigable streams, teeming oyster beds, even its fine sand—made the good life inevitable. There's nothing of the nouveau riche about Cumberland either; too much old-fashioned charm lingers for that.

Those who know Cumberland best insist it is "tidewater country," closer in outlook and tradition to Maryland and Delaware than to the rest of New Jersey. The interesting corollary is that two of Cumberland's vital towns (Bridgeton and Millville) are at the head of navigation, yet are deep in the county interior. In fact, the twisting Cohansey Creek and the serpentine Maurice River have been vital keys to unlocking Cumberland's riches—and to preserving her "tidewater" character.

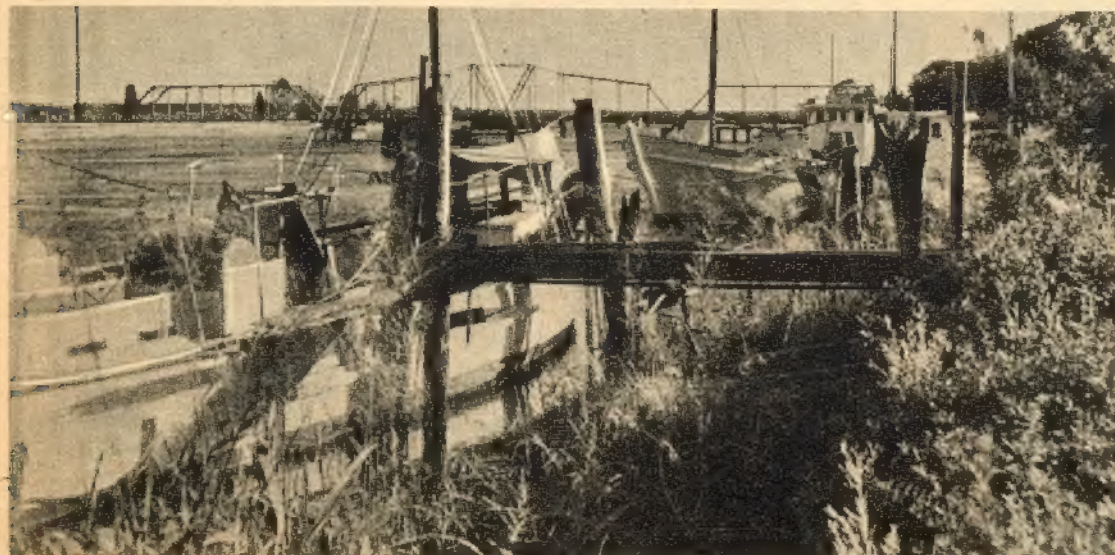
The broad mouth of the Maurice enticed Swedish settlers off Delaware Bay in the 1630s (and tradition says Swedes named the river—after the ship Prince Maurice, which burned in the river at a spot known as "No Man's Friend"). Swedish settlements near Dorchester and Leesburg disappeared soon, probably before Quaker colonizer John Fenwick envisioned "Ye Greate Streete" of Greenwich on the Cohansey in the 1680s.

Fenwick's fancy of a street 100 feet wide and two miles long came into being a year after his death in 1683. Settlers from New England built on 16-acre plots along "Ye Greate Streete" and immediately opened trade with

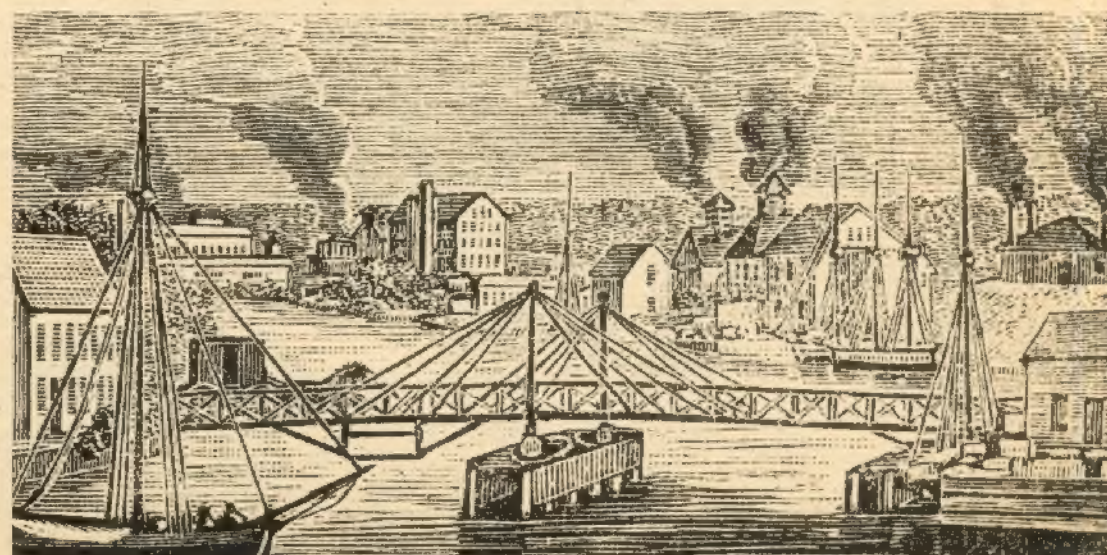


Picturesque shoal-draft schooners at Bivalve, on the Maurice River, home port for most of Jersey's

oyster fleet. The Delaware Bay area provides ten per cent of all oysters dredged in the county.



Maurice River scenes of today and yesterday. Oyster boats and span at left are at Mauricetown, established as Mattock's Landing in 1730.



while 1840 "view" shows some of the manufacturing plants on the south side of Millville, which got its start in 1750 as Shingle Landing.





Landis avenue, broad main street of Vineland, "poultry center of the East," shows how dream of Charles K. Landis has materialized.

the outside world (particularly with the village of Philadelphia, founded by William Penn in 1682).

UP creek Richard Hancock, Fenwick's surveyor, built a sawmill in 1686 where Bridgeton now stands, but his interest was timber, not town-founding. Across the Cohansey from Greenwich, Connecticut colonists arrived in the 1690s to establish New England Cross Roads and Fairton.

Cohansey, as all of the region surrounding the creek came to be known, enjoyed good harvests—to the extent that a legislative act in 1695 authorized annual Greenwich fairs in April and October. Philadelphia traders and their ladies found the fairs worth sailing up Cohansey Creek to visit and the twice-yearly event continued uninterrupted until 1762.

Just as the Cohansey united interior and coast, it divided settlers on the east and west banks until settlers near Hancock's sawmill in 1716 built the bridge that gave the settlement the name "Cohansey Bridge" or merely "The Bridge."

"The Bridge" it remained, too, after the Legislature sliced away about half of Salem County to form Cumberland County on January 19, 1748. Even the moving of the county seat from Greenwich to "The Bridge" in December, 1748, didn't change the appellation (or add much to the stature of the struggling village). Indeed, the first court house had been built and burned and a second court house constructed before the hamlet finally called itself Bridgetown in 1765.

CUMBERLAND prosperity centered in Greenwich as the town rolled toward a 1774 date with immortality. Largest town in Cumberland and boasting a port good enough to carry on trade from Philadelphia to Boston, Greenwich seemed a logical place for Captain J. Allen to drop anchor from his brig Greyhound in the gathering dusk of December 12, 1774. Captain Allen knew his cargo of tea would be unwelcome in Philadelphia, guessed that it might be safe in Greenwich, particularly since Dan Bowen was willing to store it in his cellar.

Townpeople buzzed angrily but generally agreed to wait on a decision from Bridgetown. Then, on the night of December 22 a little band rendezvoused in the home of Richard and

Lewis Howell near Shiloh, disguised themselves as Indians and headed for Greenwich. They stole through Greenwich's darkened streets, removed the tea to an open field and destroyed it in a roaring fire which lit up the village and indelibly marked Greenwich's place in time.

Naturally there were protests from financially interested nonpatriots, and seven of the tea burners were brought to trial in April, 1775. Sheriff Jonathan Elmer, brother of one of the "Indians," summoned a sympathetic jury, foremaned by Daniel Elmer, Jonathan's nephew. Small wonder that the burners were found not guilty. That trial, incidentally, produced at least three outstanding New Jersey citizens. Richard Howell, one of the burners, became Governor of the state in 1792 and was succeeded by Joseph Bloomfield, counsel for the defendants, in 1801. Sheriff Elmer was elected one of New Jersey's first two U. S. senators.

Reputedly the tea burners were led by Rev. Philip Vickers Fithian, along with his cousin, Joel Fithian, and Andrew Hunter. Philip kept copious journals—of his Princeton College days, of his travels in Virginia, of his love for Elizabeth Beatty and of his life as an Army chaplain in the early days of the Revolution. His death of

camp fever in 1776 cut short his brilliant existence, but his journals (published by Princeton University Press in 1900 and 1934) make him live on.

HALF of Cumberland's population lived west of Cohansey Creek in one-sixth of the county area by Revolutionary War time. A stage route from Greenwich to Philadelphia began in 1774, via Roadstown—and skipping Bridgetown. Out along the Maurice River a few settlers had established Mattock's Landing (now Mauricetown) in the 1730s and Lucas Peterson built a solitary house at Shingle Landing (now Millville) in 1750.

Agriculture dominated Cumberland life well before the strife with England and naturally the county became looked upon as a wartime food supplier. Gen. Washington declared that if it hadn't been for the provisions sent by Cumberland and Salem counties to feed his troops at Valley Forge he would have had no army to continue the war. Patriotic feeling ran high, even though the war little touched the county, and the reading of the Declaration of Independence from the court house steps in 1776 called for prolonged pealing of Bridgetown's own Liberty Bell.

Bridgetown had special cause for

grief in 1780 when word came of the sinking of the schooner "Gov. Livingston" off the Capes of the Delaware. Bridgetown's patriots had built the ship and sent her across the seas on only one successful voyage before a British frigate ended her glory days.

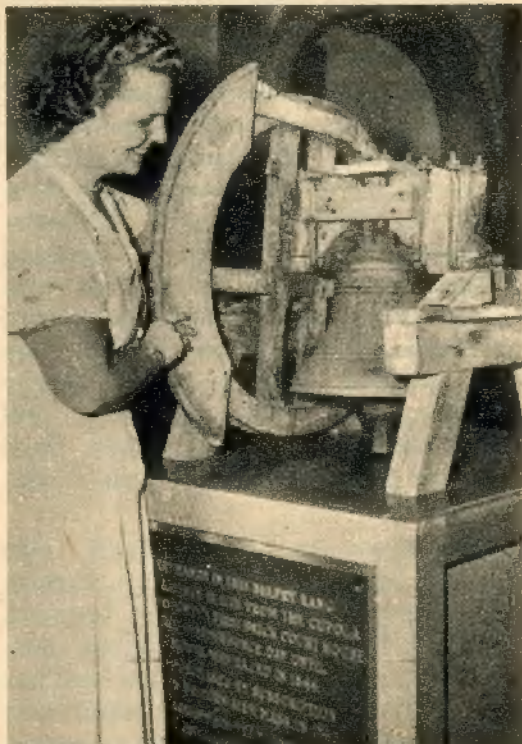
AS the 18th Century waned Cumberland grew but slowly. An "actual count" showed only 8,248 persons living in the county in 1790, with about 300 of those in the county seat. Considerable up-county wheat cleared through Bridgetown and Greenwich for Philadelphia, but local residents had to be content with once-weekly mail service. On the Maurice River, life centered about Port Elizabeth, established in 1785 by Mrs. Elizabeth Clark Bodeley, Salem widow.

James Lee, a wandering Irishman whose ability to establish industry exceeded his interest in continuing it, saw gold in the inexhaustible quantities of fine sand surrounding Port Elizabeth and brought glass-making to Cumberland in 1799. He set up the Eagle Glass Works in Port Elizabeth that year, then in 1806 started making window glass in Millville. From those beginnings Cumberland has become New Jersey's principal glass center. Bridgetown got its first plant in 1830 and Vineland welcomed a plant in the 1870's.

Millville's growth started in 1803 when Joseph Buck laid out a town and built himself a fine mansion on the corner of Main and High streets. Later several entrepreneurs banded together as the Union Company and dammed the river to form Union Lake as a source of power to run their mills.

DOWNSTREAM, Joseph J. ("Coffee") Jones, son of a wealthy Philadelphia coffee merchant, bought hundreds of acres near Jonathan Dallas's Ferry and renamed the village "Port Norris" after his son Norris Jones. "Coffee" tried raising sheep and did well until an 1812 storm killed thousands of his animals. He prospered in the lumber industry but discouragement overcame him when the British captured his wood-ship "Plow Boy" in the War of 1812 and demanded \$1,000 ransom. Soon "Coffee" disposed of his real estate in a lottery and moved away, leaving only his son's name in memory.

Bridgetown acquired a bank—the  
(Continued on Following Page)



Jersey's Liberty Bell at Bridgeton rang out news on July 4, 1776, and monument at Greenwich honors the tea-burning patriots of 1774.







Oyster fleet dredger undergoing repairs at Stocoman Shipyard in Dorchester, an important boat-building center on the Maurice River.



Sand pit near Mauricetown, one of the supply sources for the glass factories in Bridgeton, Millville and Vineland.

## CUMBERLAND COUNTY

(Continued from Preceding Page)

first in South Jersey below Camden—in 1816 and in the same year had the "w" dropped from its name when the bank issued notes bearing the apparent typographical error, "Bridgeton." Residents liked the shortened form (or else felt it would be easier to change the town name than a bank note).

Coincidentally with the coming of the bank, hard times hit the predominantly agricultural county. That Summer of 1816 was the noted "cold Summer," when frost touched the fields often during July and August. Men wore their "great coats" in the fields at harvest time, and shook their heads in dismay when they reaped scarcely enough grain to supply seed for the next Spring. Financial distress struck the county; hundreds migrated to Ohio.

**CUMBERLAND** soil led the way back. In 1825 a fair report declared "it was manifest that increasing agricultural spirit would speedily supersede the toilsome and unprofitable labor of cutting timber." Bridgeton, with a new name and booming nail and glass factories, especially moved along—so much so that Millville's 1837 demand to move the county seat to Millville stunned Cohansey folk.

Bridgeton beat back the effort in a public referendum, but Millville threw the controversy to the Board of Freeholders for final decision. There a 4 to 4 vote prolonged debate. Finally, without advance warning to Millville, "Columbia Township" was born—and lived only long enough to cast a deciding vote for Bridgeton before lapsing quietly back into Hopewell Township.

Regular steamboat service between Bridgeton and Philadelphia started in 1845 but it had difficulty competing with the railroad from Camden which rolled into Millville in 1859 and into Bridgeton in 1861.

By then Cumberland had thrown itself wholeheartedly into the Civil War. It could boast that no other county in the nation lent the Union cause more men, in proportion to population, than Cumberland.

**T**HE county sent off its famed Cumberland Greys in the Summer of 1861, after a vigorous flag presentation ceremony in which the principal speaker punctuated his remarks by thumping

the floor with the flagstaff—so often and so enthusiastically that the outspread wings of the handsome golden eagle atop the staff broke off. Later, news of the fall of Richmond sparked a tremendous torchlight parade, led by Professor Dorville's Band and highlighted by the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" by young ladies seated on the window sills at the Female Seminary.

Letters from home to the Cumberland Greys unquestionably carried mention of a fellow named Charles K. Landis, Philadelphia lawyer and banker. Up in the unpromising woodlands of Millville Township the man of vision bought 32,000 sandy acres of straggling pines and scrub oaks, all well "charcoaled over." About 50 people lived in the vast territory on the morning of August 8, 1861, when Landis drove a stake to found his "town"—Vineland.

Most felt like the native who sidled up to Landis and asked: "What are you doing, friend?" Landis replied: "Founding a town." The native warned nearby workers that Landis was addled.

He was, in a way—for 1861. He dreamed of a model way of living in Vineland (which he quite frankly admitted would help him sell his real estate). Landis visualized a town a mile square in which would be centered industrial, governmental and cultural pursuits. Surrounding lands were for agriculture, particularly grapes. For his town he turned to New England, for his farms he turned to Italy. In the marriage of New England sagacity and thrift with Italian zeal and way-with-the-land his dream came true.

**L**ANDIS planned brilliantly. All streets were at right angles; principal streets 100 feet wide, all others 60 feet wide. He sold acreage in five-and-ten-acre plots to avoid speculation and to encourage self-ownership. Houses had to be set back 75 feet from the street in the country, 25 feet in the city. Every property owner was required to plant shade trees and grass beside the roads.

An oasis grew in the sand land. By Christmas, 1862, 75 settlers and a fiddler rallied to a celebration; by 1864 more than 1,000 acres had been sold and by 1869, 6,500 persons lived in the Landis tract (which had been

divided into Vineland and Landis Township in 1864). Interestingly enough, in this grape-growing region, nearly all residents agreed with Landis that liquor should not be sold—and Landis fought through the Legislature a bill for local option. Landis, no teetotaler, merely felt liquor was poor business.

One Vineland resident, Dr. T. B. Welch (a dentist and a staunch Methodist) had even stronger feelings about alcoholic beverages—he felt it was illogical to use fermented wine for Communion. He introduced unfermented grape juice in his own church, offered it to others. Demand (both spiritual and secular) grew to the extent that the Welch's gave up dentistry for grape-squeezing. Before the family moved its business to Westfield, N. Y., in the 1890's the grape juice concern was well on the way to its present \$15,000,000-a-year income.

**A**T about the same time that Welch's conscience prodded him into a new venture, Captain Edmund Stites of Newport catapulted Cumberland's oyster beds into wide prominence when he made the first commercial shipment of oysters from Bivalve in 1870. Maurice River fishermen had long known of the importance of oysters—starting in 1846 they transplanted seed oysters from natural beds to save the industry—but it took mass shipments to give oyster farming lasting significance.

Cumberland's pattern of growth was set by 1900. That year Charles K. Landis died, content that Vineland fulfilled his hopes (even if grape growing had given way to truck gardening, glass making and chicken raising). Glass manufacture moved to the forefront in Bridgeton and Millville. Bridgeton had become a bustling county seat, where old houses contrasted with new growth and where the town's three far-famed 19th Century private schools (West Jersey Academy, Ivy Hall Seminary and South Jersey Institute) closed their doors in favor of broader public education.

Education in Cumberland also reached out to the less fortunate, when Rev. S. Olin Garrison founded Vineland Training School for the mentally retarded in 1888. The school has now achieved a world-wide reputation for clinical therapeutics and research. Among other things, the Binet intelligence scale was introduced to this country at the school in 1908 and as

early as 1914 its representatives had been invited to 26 other states to discuss the school.

**A**NOTHER of Cumberland's remarkable young men, Charles F. Seabrook (even then known as "C. F."), was 19 years old in 1900. His fertile mind kept visualizing schemes beyond the reach of his father's small 57-acre farm. "C. F." bought out his father in 1912 and organized Seabrook Farms, Inc. He tried everything—overhead irrigation, mechanization, cold storage—and slowly built his farm to 3,000 acres by World War I. He induced a New York firm to build a canning plant on his property in 1922 and just 11 years later his experiments with frozen foods resulted in Seabrook's first consumer pack.

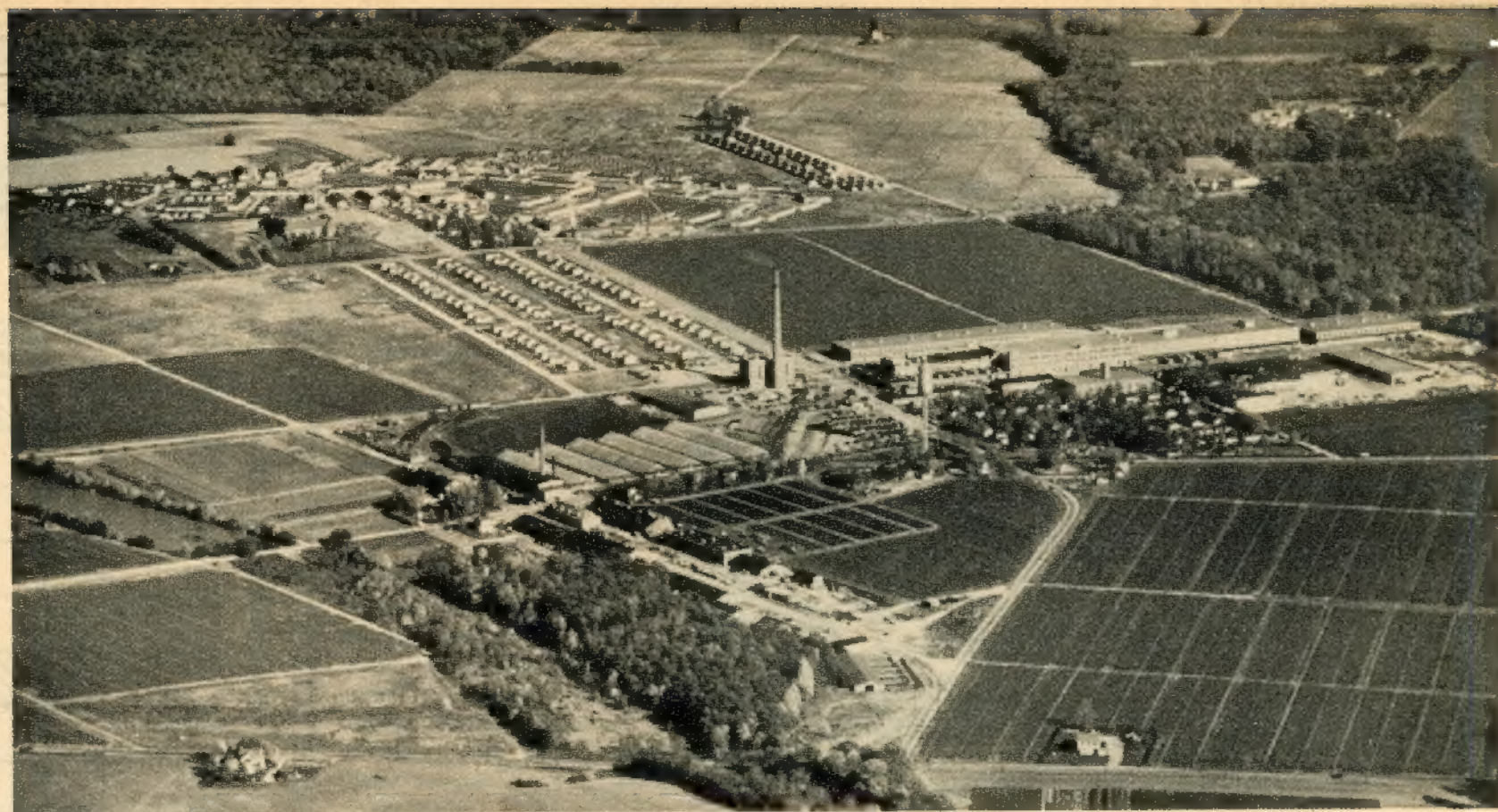
Today Seabrook Farms is far and away the biggest agricultural enterprise in New Jersey. Its owned acreage exceeds 19,000 acres and nearly 1,000 other South Jersey farmers lease their lands to Seabrook or sell the company products from another 40,000 acres. Seabrook has led the way to making Cumberland New Jersey's number one agricultural county, particularly in the use of mechanized equipment and modern methods in the fields.

**S**HARING the phenomenal 20th Century rise of Seabrook and Cumberland farming in general is Vineland's poultry industry. Farmers in 1900 grew chickens only to round out their diets. Even the establishment in 1905 of the Vineland Co-operative Poultry Association had only minor commercial overtones. That group consisted mainly of sportsmen interested in exhibiting their prize poultry.

However, the founding of the Vineland Co-operative Egg Auction in 1931 focused attention on what had happened in the northeastern section of the county. Since 1934 the auction has sold \$50,000,000 worth of eggs; today it boasts of being the largest egg co-operative in the world.

Vineland in 1952 is the poultry center of the East ("the egg basket of the nation" the prideful say). Millions of eggs are laid in Vineland nests, millions of baby chicks are hatched and sent to far-off farms. Statistics are staggering—one farm can hatch 1,800,000 baby chicks at a time; another hatches over 8,000,000 annually. Small wonder that Cumberland's annual poultry income is close to \$8,000,000, tops in New Jersey.





Heart of Seabrook Farms "empire," which has helped make Cumberland the state's No. 1 agricultural county.

CUMBERLAND tops the state in most agricultural categories, with its nearly \$22,000,000 in all farm products well ahead of second-place Monmouth's \$17,500,000 total. Cumberland is first in the amount of irrigated land, first in acreage and production of vegetables, first in the amount of farm products sold co-operatively, first in the number and volume of fruit and vegetable processing plants. One-sixth of Cumberland's population is engaged in agriculture on the county's 3,500 farms, and more than half of the county's acreage is tilled.

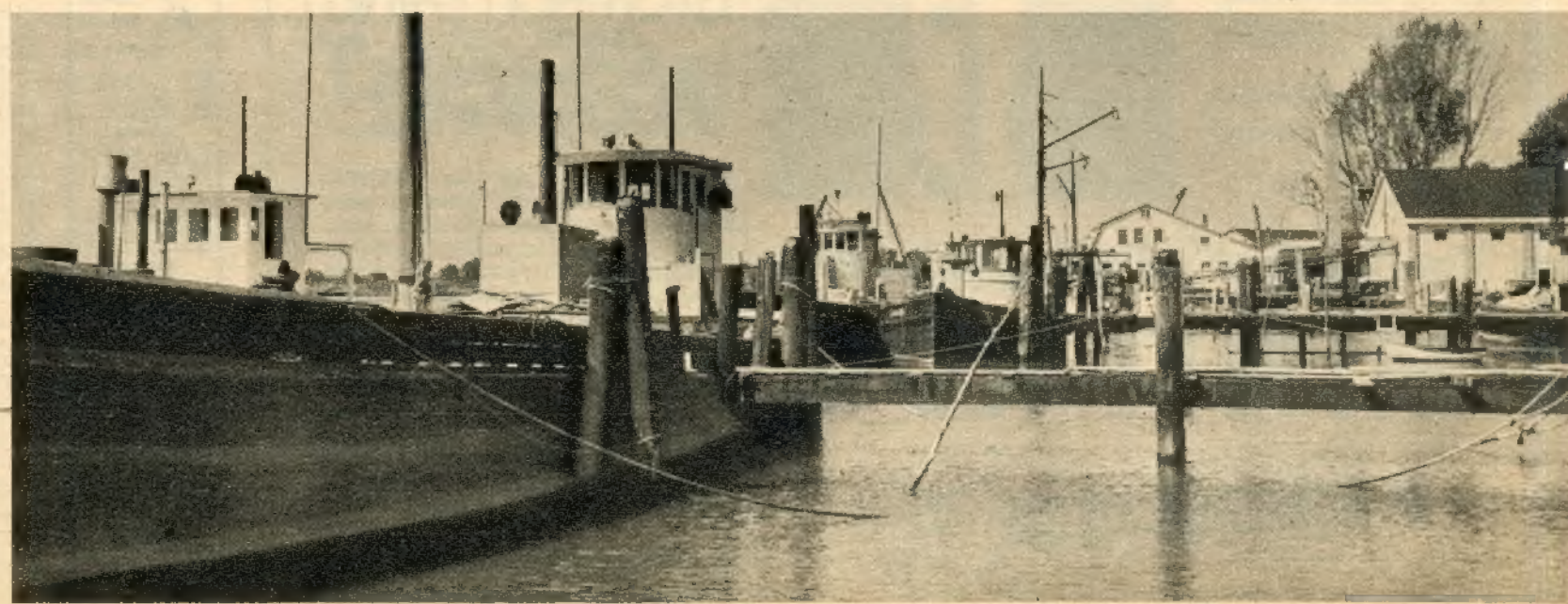
Yet Cumberland's economic success depends on more than the farmer. The glass industry, with smaller plants now largely consolidated into larger systems, is of supreme importance. Owens-Illinois Glass Co., owner of the Bridgeton works, turns out 300,000,000 glass bottles annually. Kimble Glass Co. in Vineland is one of the nation's largest producers of scientific laboratory glass and Armstrong Cork Co. produces heavily in the Millville glass plant.

Oysters do their share—to the extent of about \$6,000,000 annually. More than 100 boats hover over the oyster beds in season, with payrolls running more than \$70,000 weekly. Boatbuilding is important along the Maurice River, and during World War II vessels ranging up to 165 feet in length slid down the ways at Leesburg and Dorchester. Moreover, the \$2,000,000 sand industry finds good digging close to the Maurice River.

THUS, Cumberland has achieved the success nature intended for it. The greenness of its fields impresses; the breadth of Vineland surprises a first-time visitor (particularly since the July 1, 1952, merger with Landis Township made Vineland the largest city—in area—in New Jersey). Millville and Bridgeton wear a mantle of success tinged with old-time color. Oyster fleets make the Maurice River as picturesque as it is economically vital.

Today and yesterday merge in Cumberland. Particularly is that typified in Greenwich on the Cohansey. There Ye Greate Streete dozes contentedly in the knowledge that its moment in history is secure. There dwell folks who are proud of Cumberland's 1952 well-being; there dwell folks who treasure every detail of the tea-burning.

There, in fact, is Jersey's Tidewater Land



Oyster boats plying out of Cohansey Creek at piers in Greenwich. The annual oyster income is \$6,000,000.